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THE REASONS FOR JAPAN'S DEMANDS UPON CHINA

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[The following important and illuminating discussion of the Japanese-Chinese negotiation was mailed from Tokyo by Dr. Honda on May 5, as he expresses it, "on the eve of an ultimatum being sent to Peking, following China's rejection of the modified demands of Japan." Since the article was written China has accepted those demands which Japan regarded as essential, leaving the others for future discussion.—EDITORS.]

Great Britain opened China to foreign commerce, much as the United States of America later took Japan out of her long seclusion. The largest share of Chinese trade remained in English hands, until German and Japanese competition on the Yantgze River began to assume some importance. Later the Anglo-Japanese Alliance came into existence, primarily to check Russia's descent upon China which would have jeopardized the safety of India and Japan alike. Finally as a part of the present World War the island Empires have been fighting together to drive Germany out of the South Seas, the Pacific and Indian Oceans. Whatever the British in the Far East may say or do, Downing Street will feel obliged to acquiesce in any reasonable assurance of Japan's preponderance in China, especially in view of the two outstanding facts namely, that the vast but scarcely populated British possessions are practically closed to Japanese immigration, and that Germany after the War is more than likely to strive hard for a recovery and extension of her spot in the sun in the Far East.

Japan's victory over Russia made the United States more concerned than before over the balance of power in the Pacific. She naturally feared lest Japan's undisputed sway

on the sea might expose the Philippines and Hawaii to serious danger. What was done to Korea might be done to Manchuria or other parts of China. American trade in Manchuria, at any rate, fell off sharply as a result of Japan's use of the South Manchurian railway and the port of Dairen (Dalny). A few attempts of the United States government to support China, in these disquieting conditions, against foreign encroachment, only ended in bringing the former rivals, Russia and Japan closer in friendship and to ear-mark Outer and Eastern Mongolia as their respective spheres of influence. While admitting that Japan urgently needs to colonize Korea and Manchuria in order to accommodate her teeming population, against which America has closed its doors even more tightly than England, the Washington government is not unmindful of its pledged duty to stand for the territorial integrity of China and an equal opportunity there for American trade and capital. This moral backing must also be inspired in some degree by a diplomatic motive, for when the long-established Chinese Exclusion Act and Anti-Chinese sentiment in the United States had eventually resulted in a Chinese boycott of American goods, a new epoch of reconciliation and friendliness was ushered in, as if to keep China on America's side to prevent the two Far Eastern neighbors from making common cause against the Western continent. Here again, however, all fair-minded Americans seem practically agreed that China must accept Japan's leadership, sooner or later, in one form or another, if they mean to coöperate in maintaining a Monroe doctrine for East Asia.

The traditional policy of Chinese diplomacy, for thousands of years, has been to check one barbarian with another. More than once, in consequence, an alien and barbarian dynasty has been substituted for the native Chinese; but in a century or two, the conquerors would be assimilated by the conquered, lose their political efficiency and military virtues, and be reconquered or driven away by the Chinese. The fall of the Manchus and the organization of the present Republic by the Chinese was the latest instance of this. Western powers and Japan, however, are not likely to be

absorbed into Chinese culture so easily. Foreign assistance in quelling the Taiping Rebellion only prolonged the tottering existence of the Manchu dynasty for half a century. The triple European intervention against Japan in 1895 resulted in the Russian, German, French and British occupation or "leasing" of Chinese territories. After the Russo-Japanese War, American support of China's cause left the erstwhile antagonists more strongly entrenched in Manchuria and Mongolia. Assiduous advances made by the provisional Republican government, in order to obtain its speedy recognition by the treaty powers—except the United States of America which had acknowledged the new régime early and singly—merely resulted in swelling its national debt, in giving away more railway and other rights and interests, and thus in paving the way for the long-feared partition of China on the slightest provocation. Was this not the reason why America withdrew from the six Power political entanglement and began an independent career of economic and philanthropic investment?

Formosa was formerly a seat of Franco-British rivalry, while Russia and England later contended for the controlling influence over Korea. The result of Japan's fighting against China and Russia was to keep Formosa, Korea and Manchuria from European domination or possession. In the Boxer Trouble of 1900, although Japan fought on the side of Occidental forces, her best endeavors were directed to shielding China against dismemberment. The object of the joint operation at Tsingtao in 1914 was, as far as Japan was concerned, to drive political Germany entirely out of China. Having thus waged four expensive wars, all through the benighted, inefficient, unwieldy condition of its continental neighbor, the island Empire of the Far East naturally feels entitled to the largest possible share of influence, in order to retain the now-independent parts of Asia for the Asiatics, to be responsible for the prevention of further encroachment, until China is strong enough to hold her own against any foreign aggressor, whether Eastern or Western. And could this not be best accomplished before the Great War came to an end, while China was unable to invite an

effective intervention of Japan's present enemy, according to the traditional principle of "befriending the far-off to check the near-by?"

With this in view, Japan's demands on China were put forward on January 18, 1915. Some of them the Peking government rejected on the ground that they infringed China's sovereign rights; others were opposed on the plea that they conflicted with the vested interests of other Powers. Have those other Powers, then been respecting the principles of territorial integrity and equal opportunity? Is not Outer Mongolia, for instance, more Russian than Chinese, both in name and in practical administration? Has not Great Britain virtually succeeded in reducing Thibet to a buffer state between Russia, China and India? Have not Russia, Germany, France and America acquired rights in the so-called British sphere of influence on the Yantze River, while England herself has her railways or railway rights in North China, which are in or close to the Japanese sphere of South Manchuria and East Mongolia? Excepting the United States of America, no "interested" Power has really and faithfully adhered to the doctrine of territorial integrity; and even American firms have made contracts with China, some of which practically monopolize a certain line of business for a stated length of time, while others undertake to repair or build docks and arsenals in the Japanese sphere of Fuhkien. The sphere of influence theory is inconsistent with the open door and the idea of territorial integrity, so that rival Powers can always blame each other or claim what they wish from China, according to the principle best suited to each case. The crux of the situation, therefore, is that the only state whose destiny depends upon that of China and which can and must defend her from further aggression, should be so strongly intrenched there that no other state dare challenge the united antagonism of the two Asiatic nations.

President Yuan, Peking diplomats, nay, all the thinking portion of the Chinese population must know this, for they also know the existence of another, much worse possibility. There have been Japanese jingoes, Chinese revolutionaries,

and Occidental observers who alike contend that the four hundred millions of Chinese would fare far better under Japanese rule or protectorate, with greater security of life and property for less onerous taxes. For, if China should go on opposing Japan with the aid of western Powers, a general disruption of the one is sure to ensue which the other must prevent for its own life and independence. Otherwise the fate of East Asia would be that of the African continent, a branch office of the European balance of power. The people of the United States must also feel a sympathetic interest in this question of all twentieth century questions. Their forebears fought for the political and spiritual independence of their home-land, which exactly corresponds to the Sino-Japanese War of twenty years ago. The first few states went on adding to their territories and their power for years, so that eventually the federal government felt itself strong enough to proclaim the Monroe Doctrine in order to keep off any further increase of European influence on the American continent. It is now quite free to treat Mexico as it wishes, either to let her improve her last opportunity of setting her house in order, or else to bring her under American control, without any interference on the part of other powers or continents.

The time has come for Japan virtually to claim a supreme position in the Far East, and simultaneously to settle the stupendous Chinese question once for all. Of the three sick old men of the world, Turkey will be most severely dealt with when the European conflict is over, while Mexico is destined to come under the more or less direct care of her strongest neighbour. The third and biggest problem, China, could not wait for a solution, for Germany, deprived of its over-seas possessions but not entirely crushed in militarism and industry, is more than likely to endeavor strenuously to recover her lost influence and trade along the line of least resistance. China at any rate still secretly hopes that the Kaiser's people will come back to her with redoubled energy, so that they may assist her in opposing the nearby rivals. The moral support of China by the Washington government might perhaps be converted into

something more tangible, after the War, through the capital and energy of the German elements in the United States. England will be kept too busy for years to come, both in recuperating from the great struggle and in facing German attempts at revenge, to lend her protecting hand to China, however great her vested interests there may be. These and similar considerations and circumstances apparently induced the Tokyo government to make up its mind, before it was too late, to play the last card toward China and to attempt to settle all questions pending ever since the time of the triple European interference on her behalf.

The long ninety days' discussion and negotiation at Peking, whatever may be said against such a procedure, enabled both parties to understand each other as best they could and to see what attitude other Powers would assume on the pending questions. As Russia has experienced a similar opposition and obstruction from China in regard to Outer Mongolia, she would rather have Japan resort even to military coercion if necessary in order to develop China's resources and increase her foreign trade. America, over and above its sympathy for a Monroe Doctrine in the Far East, would rather see Japan and China settle their questions between them, so long as the open door principle is faithfully guarded, because to drive either nation to desperation would mean a boycott of American trade or else insistence upon Asiatic immigration into the United States. England must feel an additional need of retaining the good will of her Asian ally, because India after the War, conscious of its tried strength as was China after Japan's victory over a European Power, may join in the cry of Asia for the Asiatics. The probability that Germany will attempt in the future to compete with England in China, as well as in Europe, seems to tighten the bonds of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance all the more.

Why then did not China accept the inevitable more readily? First, because the diplomatic and press campaign of Germany was so successful and thorough-going that her present and potential strength was greatly over-rated by the race of power-worshippers. Secondly, because many English

and American advisers, journalists, traders, missionaries, and "friends" of China counselled warlike opposition or passive resistance, which they said would bring the whole world's sympathies round the helpless, as in the case of Belgium in the Great War. They meant well, no doubt, and had no ulterior motives. Neither had they any political insight, which would have revealed to them the burning question, "Who shall be the practical defender of the Far Eastern independence?" Thirdly and lastly, because to resist the Japanese demands to the last moment was the only way of securing the central government against local uprisings, which would have endangered the position of the Republican President. This procedure had been followed before in regard to other claimants, and is the secret of keeping a semblance of national unity among the conflicting, rebellious elements of China. Very likely, both parties knew from the beginning what the outcome was to be and each took its own premeditated course to arrive at the same point eventually.

It may be well for outside critics to remember that, in spite of all wishes to the contrary, China has never been treated as an independent state, nor has there been any practical withdrawal of the "sphere of influence" claim, which is utterly inconsistent with the principle of territorial integrity. England, France, Russia, Germany, and Japan have all taken larger or smaller slices of China's possessions, under various pretexts and circumstances. These powers and the United States station their own garrisons on Chinese territory, use their own currency and keep their own postal system in the so-called foreign concessions; the maritime customs are entirely under foreign control, and strangely enough the entity of China has been guaranteed between various nations without consulting the wishes of the Chinese! Technically speaking, therefore, Japan can not defend certain of her demands on the ground that they have more respect for China's sovereignty than other Powers have had. But each war, whether in or out of China, that affects the balance of power in the Far East, also directly affects the so-called status quo on the Pacific, thus opening

a new chance for Western aggression or Eastern consolidation. In plain words, the present deal was to force China into an alliance in disguise with Japan, so that the fighting resources of the one and the natural resources of the other could be brought together for mutual benefit and self-protection, as well as to ensure for the world the commercial open door and economic equal opportunity.

From the view-point of internal politics, however, the pending diplomacy has been used a great deal, in both countries both as an opportunity for encouraging a united front in the face of a national crisis and also for stirring up party dissensions. Especially was this latter the case in Japan, when the revised demands, submitted to the Peking government by Minister Hioki on April 26, were known to have yielded on some important points, either to save China's face or to respect the wishes of a third party.

Some papers and critics, as well as those groups of men who always agitate for a strong, forward policy in China, naturally cried out that Japan should not yield an inch as it would expose her to China's eternal contempt and to the lasting distrust of friendly Powers. But their voice was so feeble and their clamor came so late, that impartial observers might safely infer they were well under official control. No mob violence or alarming demonstration was likely to ensue, which might have caused a ministerial crisis or a reversion to the former attitude of peremptoriness.

All this, however, did not mean that the people, or the thinking portion of the people, were completely satisfied with Baron Kato's diplomacy. On the contrary, they pointed out his mistakes, and contended that, in so far as Japan's ally was still fighting against our common enemy, England should have been consulted before putting forward the first demands, if there had been any valid reason against waiting till the general war was over; that, if a military demonstration was deemed necessary to bring China to terms, as had often been the case in dealing with her, the negotiations should have been opened immediately after the fall of Tsingtao, before the Japanese troops were recalled; that the Foreign Minister himself or some one else, impor-

tant enough to confer direct with President Yuan, should have gone to Peking at the outset; that, if Tokyo was determined, as it should be, to carry through its demands, no time or opportunity should have been allowed China to invite German and other criticism on her behalf; that, when a deadlock resulted after three months' discussion on minor points, the whole proceeding should have been suspended instead of compromising national prestige abroad by yielding; that treachery and unfairness would long be attached to the good name of Japanese diplomacy, which could not have been the case if all its claims, however preposterous they might have sounded, had been made public to the whole world with an accompanying statement of full reasons for Japan's irrevocable and unflinching determination; and so on *ad infinitum*.

Military expansionists, above all others, must naturally have been disappointed and disgusted with the later development of affairs. But neither the army leaders nor the elder statesmen are in a position to force the Okuma cabinet to adopt more drastic measures on the pending question. For they depend upon the May session of the Diet to vote the two division increase in the army, which has proved a stumbling block to previous administrations. It would be impossible, under the existing circumstances, to recommend to the Emperor any one capable of organizing a stronger or more enduring government. Many journalists and agitators, who would incite popular indignation and instigate mob violence, are either the old Premier's friends and followers or belong to the party under the leadership of the Foreign Minister. The minority Opposition must wait till positive proof of a diplomatic blunder is forthcoming, in order to make its voice heard by the nation at large; and this alleged blunder, moreover, must be grave enough to cause a split within the ranks of the Cabinet supporters, in order to bring about the fall of Count Okuma.

Why, then, did the venerable Premier, who is the President of the Peace Society of Japan, approve of a step apparently so unworthy of his noble ideals? Why, then, did the Foreign Minister, a diplomat so imbued with the British

idea of equitable dealing, failed to take Japan's ally into confidence before venturing on a course which eventually had to be modified to some extent?

The only possible explanation of this mystery is suggested by some foreign friends of Japan. In the December session of Parliament, the then majority Opposition taxed the Foreign Office scathingly about its consulting Anglo-American interests over much in the early stages of the German-Japanese hostilities. Although Baron Kato managed to silence all hostile interpellation in the House, he was not apparently quite sure of the people's support of his diplomatic methods. When, therefore, the dissolution of Parliament was effected through the Opposition veto of the army expansion, the sweeping demands on China, which apparently had been drafted soon after the opening of the Tsingtao campaign, were put forward before the general election took place, without referring them to any outside Power. Japanese garrisons in China, moreover, were strengthened as the election day drew near, as if to impress upon the constituents that it would be well to support the existing government in the midst of such an international crisis. This and other causes having then transpired to bring an unexpected majority to the ministerial side, the government evidently felt it safe to yield to some extent to the wishes of China and other Powers. At any rate, China, as well as Occidental observers, have accepted this explanation in the past and will continue to accept it in the future. As a stroke of home politics, this was doubtless a success. But the means employed for attaining the end seems to jeopardize national dignity and diplomatic justice, so much so that it is impossible for uninformed Japanese to believe in this clever explanation.

As diplomatic secrecy was strictly kept in Japan, far more was heard from China, Europe and America regarding the negotiations, than through Japanese sources. The success or failure of this deal therefore can only be gauged by the future development of affairs, as was decidedly the case with the alleged blunders at Portsmouth and the subsequent riots in Tokyo, in 1905. In the meantime, the fair-

mind people in Japan, including foreign critics, still cherish the idea that a more disastrous mess would have been made or a more aggressive policy adopted, had the Seiyukai party been in power without a single statesman or diplomat of either Count Okuma's broadness or of Baron Kato's force of character.